

AN INTERNSHIP REPORT AND COMPARATIVE STUDY  
OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' CONSULTATION  
PRACTICES IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND  
HARLOW, WEST ESSEX

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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AN INTERNSHIP REPORT AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGISTS' CONSULTATION PRACTICES IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND  
AND HARLOW, WEST ESSEX

By

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An internship report submitted to the School of  
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

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## ABSTRACT

This Internship report documents the writer's Spring Summer 1995 internship placement in Harlow, Essex, England in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education in School Psychology. The report is divided into two sections, a placement component and a research component. The placement component addresses the setting, the goals and objectives, the implementation and evaluation of the internship, and the intern's personal reflections. The research component undertakes a comparative analysis of the consultative practices of eight (8) educational psychologists: four practising in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, and four practising in Harlow, Essex, England. Results indicated both similarities and differences between the two groups of psychologists. These findings were analysed in terms of diverse conceptual consultative models and frameworks within current educational psychology.

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## **CHAPTER 1: SETTING AND RELATED ISSUES**

### **a. Overview of Internship and Internship Report**

An internship placement to meet a partial requirement of the Masters of Educational Psychology Programme at Memorial University of Newfoundland was undertaken by the student during the Spring Semester, 1995. The internship took place in England from April 28th through July 22nd, 1995, under the supervision of on-site and university supervisors. The internship experience aimed to integrate the theoretical learnings of academic coursework with the practical knowledge of actual psycho-educational casework experiences. The internship setting afforded the pursuit of this goal with the added dimension of immersion in a British educational context. The professional and personal merits of the internship in general, and of completing it in Britain, will be outlined in detail in this report, with specific emphasis on the placement component and the research component of the internship.

The following report follows the guidelines established by the Committee on Graduate Internship Programmes, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland. The report will consist of two general components: a placement component with a reflective, critical discussion of the value of the activities in meeting the specific objectives identified in the internship proposal, and a research component (Harte, Sheppard, Collins, and Kennedy, 1995).

These two components will be broken down into specific sub-units that will include contextual information on the internship goals and objectives (i.e. rationale, implementation and evaluation), and a comparative analysis of educational psychology in two educational systems. A brief description of the internship setting is intended to give a contextual reference point which will facilitate the comparative analysis of the data collected.

The research component will include a statement of the research question, a related literature review, a description of the research design, a report of research findings, a comparative analysis of Essex and Newfoundland educational systems, recommendations for implementation within the internship setting, a bibliography, and copies of data collection instruments (attached as appendices).

#### **b. The Internship Placement**

The pursuit of an Educational Psychology internship in the United Kingdom was driven in part by the writer's interest in practising in, and conducting an analysis of, the English education system, with special emphasis on English psycho-educational practice. To achieve this goal, the internship was pursued in the town of Harlow, Essex, Great Britain. Essex is a large education authority, providing a broad continuum of educational services for almost a quarter of a million children and



young people (Kerfoot, 1995). Harlow is a community of about 90,000 inhabitants (approximately the same size of the City of St. John's, Newfoundland) situated in West Essex. Harlow is one of twenty one "new towns" in Great Britain, communities designed to disperse both industry and population away from the congestion of overcrowded cities, and to provide economic stimulus to depressed regional economies following the second World War (Bulcock and Beebe, 1993).

The internship congruent with the writer's professional goals was made possible through the Harlow Campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland, now in its twenty fifth year of operation. Since its inception, the Harlow Campus has accommodated both undergraduate and graduate students across faculties, including Education, Social Work, Commerce and Nursing. The internship was facilitated through efforts of Memorial University faculty who linked collaboratively with representatives of the West Essex Local Education Authority (LEA) and its Educational Psychological Service (EPS). By emersion in the English educational system, the intern was afforded the opportunity to explore a broader range of psycho-educational experiences, and to complete comparative research that could not be accessed in a local Newfoundland setting.

**c. The English Education System, the Code of Practice,  
and the 5 Stages of Assessment.**

*The English Education System*

The English education system holds the following basic philosophical beliefs: that all children have a right to a broad and balanced curriculum (including the National Curriculum); that parents have an important role to play and should be fully involved in decisions about their child's education; that most children with special educational needs will be helped in their local primary or secondary school; that a small number of children may need the expertise available in special schools; and that schools play a crucial part in helping children make progress (Essex County Council Education, 1995).

Even though, historically, there existed a common philosophical foundation for the delivery of educational services throughout England, the practicalities and mechanics of delivery were left to individual interpretation by counties, LEAs and schools. The resultant variability in education delivery across the United Kingdom is targeted by the British Government for reduction in the direction of best practice.

At present, the education system in Great Britain is in a period of transition. With the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1989 (mandated by the Education Reform Act of 1988), the Government attempted to set out what every

child should know, understand and be able to perform at each stage of his/her education in core and foundational subject areas. This action was taken partly to address concerns related to bringing school achievement into line with the international standards of countries that had national curricula, as well as to bring different regions of England into some degree of homogeneity. The Government identified a body of skills and knowledge that all children should be taught, and set national goals against which the performance and progress of all children were to be measured (Bulcock and Beebe, 1993).

In 1993, the British Government legislated the most recent Education Act, which continued the reform and restructuring of education. Included in this act is the legal framework which deals with special educational needs (Essex County Council Education, 1995). In Britain, children with mental or physical disabilities, which prevent or inhibit learning, have special educational rights. Special educational needs must be identified and provision must be secured by IEPs, with parents having the right to be involved in decisions affecting the educational well-being of their special needs child (Bulcock and Beebe, 1993). To support the 1993 Education Act, the Government issued the *1994 Code of Practice*, which gives guidance on how schools and other people should be dealing with special educational needs (Essex County Education, 1995).

It has been estimated that nationally some 20 per cent of the English school population will have special education needs at some time during their school career (Code of Practice, 1994). When appropriate, the educational needs of children with special needs are met in mainstream schools. Recognizing that some students will invariably need educational provision beyond the mainstream (and that such provision can strain resources), the Code attempts to best utilize educational resources across the special educational needs continuum by standardizing school and LEA responses to special educational needs. Efforts to standardize school policy on special educational needs had been underway in Essex prior to the 1993 Education Act, and were partially addressed through the Essex Stages of Assessment. It is upon the Essex model that the National 5 Stages of Assessment scheme was designed, and which presently is the national response to meeting the statutory responsibilities for assessment and provision for children with special educational needs.

#### *The Code of Practice*

The Code of Practice, which took effect on September 1st, 1994, was designed as a guide to both the school and the LEA in decision-making, assessment and "statementing" processes (i.e. the formal documenting of a child's special educational needs for the purpose of academic placement). Accordingly, those to whom the Code applies have a statutory duty to have regard for it. That is, they

must not ignore it (Code of Practice, 1994). Having "regard to the Code" varies over circumstances and time. That is, some degree of flexibility is afforded to schools in terms of how they identify, assess and make provision for children with special educational needs, provided they have regard for the Code and plan provisions in light of the same. With the introduction of school inspections every four years, schools are becoming more accountable to major stakeholders and are relying more heavily on the Code of Practice for guidance.

In an effort to meet the needs of students, parents, schools, and other stakeholders, the Code leaves room for interpretation by those using it. In effect, the Code recognizes that "there is a continuum of special educational needs, and that such needs are found across the range of ability; the continuum of needs should also be reflected in a continuum of provision. The special education needs of most children can be met effectively in mainstream schools without a statutory assessment or a Statement. To help match special educational provision to children's needs, schools and LEAs should adopt a staged approach" (Code of Practice, 1994, p. ii).

#### *The Five Stages of Assessment*

The Five Stages of Assessment guides LEAs in their identification and assessment of children's special educational needs, while including and empowering parents and schools to take an active role in this process.

The first three stages are based in the school, which will, as necessary, call upon the help of external specialists (i.e. LEA-based educational psychologists). At stages 4 and 5, the LEA shares responsibility with the school:

- Stage 1:** class or subject teachers identify or register a child's special educational needs and, consulting with the school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), take initial action.
- Stage 2:** the school's SENCO takes lead responsibility for gathering information, for coordinating the child's special educational provision, and for working with the child's teachers.
- Stage 3:** teachers and SENCO are supported by specialists from outside the school.
- Stage 4:** the LEA consider the need for a statutory assessment and, if appropriate, make a multidisciplinary assessment.
- Stage 5:** the LEA consider the need for a statement of special educational needs and, if appropriate, make a statement and arrange, monitor and review provision.

The Code does not insist that there must always be five stages, but advises the adoption of a model which recognizes the various levels of need, the different responsibilities to assess and meet those needs, and the associated variations in provision that will best reflect and promote common recognition of the continuum of special educational needs (Code of Practice, 1994, p.3)

With the introduction of a staged model of assessment, the role of the LEA-based educational psychologist moved further away from that of educational psychometrician and closer to that of psycho-educational consultant. This shift is a logical progression based on shared responsibility for a student's special educational needs including both the parent and the school through the staged model outlined above. It is a much more consultative role in which educational psychology practitioners and trainees presently find themselves.

#### **d. The Essex Formal Assessment and Evaluation Service.**

The primary role of the Essex Educational Psychology Service (EES) is to assist the LEA to meet its statutory responsibilities for children with special educational needs (Kerfoot, 1994). As per the requirements of the 1993 Education Act, and the 1989 Children Act, educational psychologists offer professional support to schools through the LEA to provide service to students with special educational needs.

The EPS in Essex is managed by a Principal Educational Psychologist, and assisted by two Assistant Principal Educational Psychologists, whose duties include introducing the Code of Practice, recruiting educational psychologists, resource development, and coordinating the work of specialist educational psychologists. The Formal Assessment and Evaluation Service (FAES) administers statutory assessments under the 1993 Education Act, and maintains statements of special educational needs. Administratively, Essex has divided its county Educational Psychology Services into six area offices, each headed by an Area Senior Educational Psychologist. Working with FAES staff, the educational psychologists receive a high level of clerical support. Educational psychologists have yearly Educational Psychologist Programmes, based on service priorities, which help determine individual educational psychologist's time allocation (Kerfoot, 1995).

### **e. Roles and Responsibilities**

Educational psychologists in Great Britain have similar qualification requirements to their counterparts in Newfoundland, Canada. Essex educational psychologists have a first degree in psychology, a teaching qualification, a minimum of two years teaching experience, and a Masters degree/professional training as an educational psychologist. They are eligible for membership with the Association of Educational Psychologists, the British Psychological Society, and for Chartered Psychologist Status (Kerfoot, 1994). As applied psychologists, educational psychologists have training and competencies in psycho-educational assessment, consultation, child and adolescent development, problem-solving, intervention, in-service training, counselling, research, project work, and monitoring and evaluation.

The specific duties and responsibilities of the educational psychologist are as diverse as the clientele:

Each Essex educational psychologist is allocated to a patch (i.e. catchment area) and is required to provide the full range of services outlined to the children living within this area. This includes services to children who are: pre-school, at mainstream school, attending Essex special schools or units, attending out-county schools, and post-16 (if at school). Educational psychologists provide advice to the LEA on the educational needs of the school-aged and pre-school children who live in their patch. Each patch usually consists of: two or three secondary schools, their feeder primary schools, special schools/units, and pre-school children. In addition to the services provided to the patch, educational psychologists contribute to the County Learning Support Policy through in-service training.



provision development, moderation of Essex Stages and other activities.

In order to support the LEA in meeting its statutory requirements towards children and in implementing the Essex Learning Support Policy, an educational psychologist provides the following priority services for children in mainstream, special or out-county schools: statutory assessment work/preparing psychological advice, contribution to annual reviews of children with statements, contribution to transition plans, multi-agency case work, advising on the needs of pupils post-16, advising on the needs of pre-school children, Stage 3 work (i.e. consultation, direct assessment, and intervention), and supporting and monitoring the Essex Learning Support Policy and the Essex Stages of Assessment. Operational standards are set and monitored closely, and annual feedback from schools is sought and used to further develop the service.

(Kerfoot, 1994, p.6)

The choice of setting facilitated the intern's desire to further develop personal competencies in specific areas of educational psychology practice, as well as analyze and contrast educational psychology between Newfoundland and Essex.

#### **f. Summary of Internship Setting**

From the above-mentioned framework, the intern selected specific areas of training and skills in which to develop competencies and gain experience, corresponding to the goals and objectives included in the original internship proposal. As some areas of personal training complemented the training received in Newfoundland, emphasis was given to these areas (i.e. informal assessment skills and consultation skills).

Implementation of the internship involved a three phase scheme carried out over the 12 week internship: first, observation and shadowing of an educational psychologist on task; second, collaboration with an educational psychologist on task; and finally, independent casework by the intern. The intern was linked to an on-site educational psychologist for supervision and mentoring. In addition, the intern's academic Faculty Supervisor was located in Harlow for the duration of the internship, and met weekly with the intern for supervision and processing of internship issues. The internship was guided by detailed goals and objectives that were drafted individually and finalized with the on-site supervising educational psychologist at the conclusion of the initial two week observation phase.

## **CHAPTER II: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **a. Rationale**

The goals and objectives to be achieved through the internship process were based on the intern's professional and personal reflection regarding competencies and skills central to educational psychology practice. In keeping with current views of educational psychology in Newfoundland, the intern's targets reflected the perspective that school psychologists must: be well versed in the disciplines of education and psychology and also aware of how this translates into practice; maintain current knowledge of instructional psychology; be aware of contemporary and emerging educational developments and psychological methods of instruction in education, and; have training in human learning, child and adolescent development, human exceptionality and cultural diversity (School Psychology in Newfoundland and Labrador, Draft). In addition, a key consideration in determining the intern's targets was the acknowledgement that the role of the educational psychologist encompasses more than psychometrics, and while assessment and provision for special education needs will remain an integral part of the practice of educational psychology, this role in itself is not sufficient to meet the needs of children, teachers, parents, and others involved with the development and education of our young (School Psychology in Newfoundland and Labrador, Draft).

The initial draft of goals and objectives was completed early in the Winter Semester of 1995, while the intern was completing course work and a practicum placement in St. John's, Newfoundland. The targets set reflected a broad base of educational psychology experience, intended to provide the intern with a well-balanced and thorough coverage of the areas of practice. These areas included the following: assessment, consultation, intervention, observation, child/adolescent development, counselling, in-servicing, problem-solving, research, supervision, and evaluation. Additional expertise would be sought in the related areas of learning disabilities, behaviour disorders, social/emotional disorders, physical disabilities, pre-school assessment, and exceptionality.

#### **b. Goals and Objectives**

The initial draft of internship goals and objectives (contained in the internship proposal) drew heavily from the academic and practical experience of the intern up to mid-February, 1995. The targets which were defined therefore reflected the Canadian setting in which the intern was studying and intended to return to seek employment. Central to this initial draft were the target areas of assessment and consultation, although varied experience across the chronological age range of the student population was clearly indicated. Some degree of flexibility was built into

the draft targets seeing that the actual reality of the English placement, the opportunities that it would provide, and the expectations that would be generated by the LEA were not formally established or confirmed at this point in time.

#### *Revised Goals and Objectives*

Upon introduction to the Essex system in which the internship would occur, a re-evaluation of the original draft goals and objectives was completed, with consideration given to the expectations and requirements of the placement itself. It was possible, with minor clarification and specification, to redraft a statement of goals and objectives that would meet the needs of the intern as well as the British supervisory bodies. These final goals and objectives were defined as follows:

1. To evaluate behaviour management programmes in different educational provisions.
2. To evaluate interventions for students in special provisions (i.e. speech-language, emotional-behavioural, moderate/severe learning difficulties, and autistic units).
3. To complete the research component of the educational psychology internship Report.
4. To develop competencies in working with the Five Stages of Assessment and the 1994 Code of Practice.

5. To develop competencies in using standardized assessment tools specific to the United Kingdom (i.e. British Assessment Scales).

6. To study brief-therapy and solution-focused therapeutic approaches, and the implications of these approaches for psycho-educational practice.

7. To pursue professional development and networking opportunities.

8. To conduct problem clarification interviews with parents, teachers and SENCOs, resulting in a list of performance concerns.

9. To contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of an individual education plan for an infant student and a junior student.

10. To contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of a behaviour management program for a primary student and a secondary student.

11. To contribute to the preparation of Stage 4 and 5 assessments and psychological advice.

12. To develop skills in informal assessment, classroom observation, curriculum-based assessment, and interview techniques.

13. To observe and participate in a preschool assessment.

14. To gain competencies in assessing and developing interventions for students with physical disabilities.

These goals and objectives are in keeping with (and in some areas exceed) the

statutory descriptions of educational psychology training and education as expressed by the National Association of School Psychologists, the Committee to Review School Psychological Services (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education), and current associations and institutions associated with educational psychology in Great Britain.

#### **c. Implementation of Goals and Objectives**

The process by which the goals and objectives were achieved is explained in the following:

*Stage 1: Observer Stage.* In this stage, covering approximately 2-3 weeks, the intern was paired with various educational psychologists on the West Isles team to observe assessment techniques, interview styles, consultation methods, evaluation skills, and other educational psychology skills across a wide range of cases, age groupings, presenting issues, and situational factors. This stage was characterized by observation of (and discussion with) educational psychologists around cases, and orientation to the English education system and the role of the U.K. educational psychologist.

*Stage 2: Participant-Observer Stage.* In this stage, the intern worked conjointly with a team educational psychologist on specific work assignments, and

consulted with a supervising educational psychologist regarding assessment, consultation, intervention and management processes. Stage 2 saw the intern taking a more active role in actual casework while being closely monitored and having detailed feedback from the educational psychologist supervisor.

*Stage 3: Independent Practitioner Stage.* In this stage, the intern was given nine (9) cases for which planning, scheduling, assessment, evaluation, and consultation were to be completed, under frequent supervision from supervising educational psychologists. The expectation at this stage was that the intern would be capable at the internship's conclusion to function as a school psychologist in a competent and professional manner.

#### **d. Evaluation of Goals and Objectives**

The intern achieved the goals and objectives agreed upon with the academic and field supervisors. Consistent with a strong commitment to professional development of trainees, the supervising educational psychologists provided weekly supervision where constructive feedback, support, guidance, and evaluative discussion were engaged. In addition, other forms of supervision and feedback were implemented, including observation of educational psychologists *in situ*, being monitored by supervising educational psychologists as a practising intern, working



collaboratively with the educational psychologists, and engaging in reflective discussions focused upon documented casework related issues.

In terms of the professional competencies acquired and the educational psychology skills developed, areas listed in the intern's goals and objectives were addressed. The intern became familiar with current British educational legislation: the 1994 Code of Practice, Essex procedures (including the Essex Stages of Assessment), and the roles and responsibilities of the educational psychologist as defined therein. This familiarity was achieved through analysis of appropriate documents, consultation with EPS and LEA staff, liaising with other education interns, and accompanying educational psychologists in their day to day work.

A range of casework was experienced by the intern in both mainstream and special education provisions, including work pertaining to severe learning difficulties, emotional/social problems, physical disabilities, behaviour problems, and various other special educational needs. The intern worked with students ranging from pre-schoolers to senior high school. Various casework assignments resulted in the writing of psychological advice for statutory assessments and the completing of related suggested entries by the intern. The intern engaged in consultation with students, parents, teachers, administrative staff, support services to schools, LEA officers, other professional agencies, and team educational psychologists to fulfil

casework requirements.

Exposure to a broad range of assessment methods and instruments was realized during the internship. These included informal curriculum-based assessment, observation, standardized testing (ie British Abilities Scales, WISC-UK), checklists, consultation, semi-structured interviews, and review of appropriate documents at both schools and the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). In addition, the intern developed a creative problem-solving paradigm complementary to educational psychology practice, modeled after Essex educational psychology practice, which incorporates hypothesis development and testing through assessment. Consideration was also given to the brief-therapy and solution-focused therapy approaches and their implications for the intern's practice.

Sessions involving "systems work" within the educational psychology framework were attended by the intern who functioned as an observer and a participant. These sessions included consultation with LEA management, SENCO support group meetings, EPS team and service meetings, Child and Family Consultation Services meetings, an educational psychology trainee conference, and group discussions.

## CHAPTER III: IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

### a. Introduction and Reflections.

As a closure exercise, the intern condensed the learnings and impressions recorded in a daily journal into a reflective narrative that was the guiding document for the intern's final evaluation meeting with both field and academic supervisors. The following extracts from the document provide an in-depth look at the personal and professional development of the intern. The following areas of learning were noted by the intern:

#### *1. The educational psychologist as critical thinker and structured problem-solver*

The intern found this hybrid approach key to the manner in which educational psychology is approached, planned for, implemented and evaluated. The problem-solving model is also central to the consultative process. As a foundational component of "good" educational psychology practice, the intern practised almost exclusively from within this model, incorporating it into all stages of the assessment process. A related point involves the educational psychologist scheduling time to think and reflect on casework and systems work.

#### *2. The educational psychologist as a systems analyst and change agent.*

Primarily acquired during *in situ* experience with supervising educational psychologists (i.e. during systems-related consultations with school administrations).

the intern gained a foundational understanding of the educational psychologist's role in the area of systems analysis. The proactive position taken by educational psychologists in this role facilitates empowerment of professionals within the system, and radically challenges the system (itself) to progressive development.

### *3. The educational psychologist as informal assessor.*

Current educational psychology practice in the U.K. challenges the exclusive reliance on standardized assessment. Observation, consultation, therapeutic interviews, checklists, curriculum-based assessment, consideration of social interaction and developmental levels, and review and/or discussion of students' work samples all qualify as valid informal assessment methods. The intern completed one standardized assessment, supplemented by informal assessment, during the internship; all other casework was completed using informal assessment procedures. This experience helped move the intern beyond the sphere of psychometrics and into the sphere of educational psychology, where a balance between formal and informal assessment is realized to ensure that the most thorough psycho-educational assessments are obtained.

### *4. The educational psychologist as accountable professional.*

The U.K. experience has reinforced the importance of a well thought-out structure of accountability, through documentation, planning, organization,

collaborative working, and professional judgement. The intern is more fully aware of the professional, ethical and legal demands made on the practising psychologist, and is better prepared to meet these challenges.

*5. The educational psychologist as organized professional*

School psychologists in the U.K. manage their time efficiently. The intern worked in a structured environment with the pressures and demands on time that both challenge the educational psychologist to work within limits, and facilitate efficient coping with caseloads. While clerical support facilitated some organizational processes, it was the educational psychologists themselves who held the majority of organizational responsibilities for dealing with their individual caseloads. The intern learned that there will always be demands on one's time, and careful prioritizing, planning and evaluation of time management is a fundamental component of professional educational psychology practice.

*6. The educational psychologist as self-actualized, empowered professional.*

Other professionals and lay persons look to educational psychologists for advice, help, support, and expertise, in order to cope with a plethora of needs. The U.K. experience reinforced, for the intern, the need for educational psychologists to know their roles, limits, and capabilities. It is important for psychologists to be comfortable saying "no" to requests and demands that are not appropriate or feasible.

*7. The educational psychologist as consultant and as counsellor.*

The educational psychologist comes into daily contact with people who are anxious, stressed, unsure, angry, and experiencing general negative affect. A major learning for the intern was that counselling skills are constantly used in daily functioning as a support to other facets of practice (i.e. consulting, assessment, etc.). Effective school psychology depends on working with immediacy issues and planned issues, and therefore requires differentiated skills in both areas.

*8. The educational psychologist as empowering agent.*

Tied closely to the previous example, this area of personal development concerns raising the consciousness and professionalism of others. While some argue that empowerment means "giving psychology away", it is more accurate to posit that the educational psychologist's role is greatly facilitated if others are clear and confident regarding their own roles and responsibilities, especially with regard to assessment of special needs. Educational psychologists can provide the guidance and support necessary for empowerment to both clients and colleagues.

*9. The educational psychologist as nurturing supervisor.*

One of the most significant experiences of the U.K. internship was the quality of supervision provided by the British team. Good educational psychologists are developed and nurtured, and the personal and professional guidance provided by the

supervisors was excellent and immeasurably helpful. The internship impressed heavily upon the intern that it is the responsibility of each practising educational psychologist to take most seriously the tutelage of interning educational psychologists, and to consider such supervision to be as important professionally as the assessments one writes or the consultations one provides. On a personal note, the supervision during the Harlow internship facilitated the development of personal feelings of efficacy and competency, and the intern is in debt to supervisors who provided both care and challenge.

*10. The educational psychologist as team member.*

No longer the domain of the isolated psychometrician, the team approach to special educational needs is becoming more widespread in Britain. The intern was impressed by the benefits of this approach, and will endeavour to practise and promote a team perspective.

*11. The educational psychologist and parental involvement.*

Parental involvement is viewed as a central component of the special needs strategy of British educational psychologists. The intern worked directly with parents at various stages of service in a collaborative manner. Educating parents concerning their rights with regard to their special needs children, and involving parents in all levels of the process means the child has a better chance of access to needed services.

### *12. The educational psychologist and the staged approach to assessment.*

The intern functioned exclusively in a staged assessment paradigm (i.e. the 5 Essex Stages of Assessment). The staged approach provides a framework from which others can become involved in the process of meeting special needs. Even informally, the theoretical knowledge and mechanical understanding of such an approach will greatly facilitate and guide the intern's professional practice and ongoing systems work.

### *13. The educational psychologist and the Law.*

The intern was impressed by two aspects of English law as it relates to children and education. First, some of the differences (i.e. child protection laws) allowed the intern to reflect and appreciate Canadian education and its supporting systems (i.e. social welfare, justice). Second, some of the British educational legislation (outlined earlier in this report) facilitates the implementation of many of the positive structures and philosophies expounded thus far. By way of example, an educational psychologist who might wish to move toward a staged approach of assessment without supporting legislation would be at the mercy of the institutions that he/she works in and with. Success depends on collaboration and this may or may not exist at various structural levels without a legislative mandate. It follows that collaborative breakdown at any level means that intervention may fail



completely. British legislation which mandates a collaborative framework provides an impetus for all persons in the system to re-evaluate their own practice and respond accordingly.

*14. The educational psychologist as generalist.*

The British Educational psychologists displayed a wide range of knowledge including pre-school assessment methods, assessment methods for children with physical disability, and systems background. In addition, some educational psychologists pursue specialist areas (i.e. family therapy, inclusionary education) which they share with team educational psychologists. The intern capitalized on the opportunity to gather as much information as possible on a wide range of educational psychology domains of practice.

*15. The educational psychologist as proactive versus reactive practitioner*

Tied closely to empowerment and systems learnings, a proactive philosophy is one that was theoretically known to the intern prior to the British internship experience. The intern was profoundly influenced by proactivity in practice. The experience was both inspirational and motivational. So strong was the influence that the intern will attempt to be proactive in practice at all levels, and to avoid the cyclical dangers of reactive practice.

*16. The educational psychologist as assertive practitioner.*

The intern identified strongly with the assertive (versus authoritarian) interpersonal style utilized by the British educational psychologists, and attempted to adopt this effective style personally and professionally. Included in this style are positive confrontational and negotiation skills that require practise and development.

*17. The educational psychologist as reflective thinker.*

Related to the issue of proactive practice, British educational psychologists make time to think about their cases. This process is crucial to offering sound and helpful advice. The intern noted that while there remained production demands, the British educational psychologists were resolute in their time management to provide for reflective analysis.

*18. The educational psychologist as developing professional.*

The internship brought into focus the magnitude of the task of being an educational psychologist. British educational psychologists are constantly engaged in professional development. Viewed as an avenue for professional development, an opportunity for non-mainstream practice (i.e. a .5 position with the a child and family clinic) is considered to be comparable to a promotion. This commitment to professional development contributes strongly to the high professional standards espoused by the educational psychology profession as a whole in Britain. A memorable quote from a collaborator during the internship which reflects this point

states that "one is either moving forward or backward, but one is never static".

#### **b. Value and Limitations of the Internship**

The intern perceives the value of the internship as being directly related to the opportunity for comparative analysis that such a cross-cultural experience provided, and the subsequent synthesis and refining of "good practice" as defined by inherent strengths in both systems. Additionally, the opportunity to observe, engage, and raise questions with British educational psychologists on good practice, and on their perspectives on educational psychology was of considerable benefit.

Upon reflection, the British system would appear to emphasize different but complementary educational psychology practices when compared to the intern's Canadian experience. The British focus on informal assessment, systems analysis, a staged approach to assessment, parental involvement, consultation, and early childhood development offered an excellent counter-point to the intern's Canadian training and experience. The complementary nature of a majority of the skills gained in the U.K. provided the intern with a broad range of skills from which to practise immediately, and to develop in the future.

The intern acknowledges that due to the natural limits on time imposed by a one year graduate program at Memorial, it would not be possible to cover all the

domains in which the educational psychologist functions in great depth. In addition, educational psychology practice in Newfoundland appears to be reactive, reflecting a psychometric approach. The intern questions the efficacy of a wholly reactive system. The literature indicates that within such a system, development of skills outside the limited context of assessment would be very difficult to achieve. As a new educational psychologist, not being aware of the possibilities of a staged approach to assessment, the benefits of advanced informal assessment, or of a "systems approach" to psychology, one might settle into a defined traditional role that seriously curbs potential in all levels of practice.

The U.K. internship, then, provided the intern with the opportunity to explore, live, and breathe educational psychology from a different perspective. The impact of such an experience will strongly define the writer's professional and personal orientations toward school psychology. Its immediate benefit for the intern has been to contribute to a larger perspective of educational psychology; the possibilities for psychological practice extending far beyond dealing (or coping) with a three year long waiting list of standardized assessments. The internship introduced the possibility of system change and "doing it better", and introduced the skills and abilities necessary to effect such change. By awakening a critical, analytical perspective towards educational psychology, the internship was invaluable. By

tempering this perspective with genuine personability, warmth, and caring, a more complete picture of the educational psychologist emerged. Paraphrasing one of the intern's British colleagues, educational psychology is a profession balanced between giving care and love, and giving knowledge and expertise: to sacrifice or ignore either (for the other) sells the educational psychologist, the system, and ultimately, the child far short of the service deserved. It is in the balance between caring and knowledge that educational psychology achieves its fullest potential.

Central to the limitations of the internship (excluding logistical problems such as transportation) were the professional and cultural deficits experienced by the intern on arrival. The intern was simply not prepared to step into the role of school psychologist, as would be expected of a U.K. trainee. While this situation was partly due to differences in training, it is a fact that the intern could have been better prepared to meet some of the EPS expectations. By way of example, an understanding of the National Curriculum, knowledge of advanced informal assessment techniques, and systems work are integral to the daily functioning of the U.K. Educational psychologist. The intern arrived without these skills or knowledge. In addition, many of the skills emphasized in the intern's Canadian experience (i.e. standardized assessment) were rarely viewed as priorities in the U.K. context by British educational psychologists. Thus, the intern found the initial month (1/3 of the

internship) highly intensive *vis-a-vis* deficit-reduction.

The intern suggests that on another occasion this deficit could be largely overcome prior to the internship through research and directed study in relevant areas, as well as specific skill development (i.e. informal assessment) during pre-practicum and practicum settings. It is also important to take into account the expectations of the cooperating EPS in West Essex. Their investment of time, expertise, energy, and hospitality are key to a successful internship experience, and their heightened input during pre-internship planning would greatly improve future internship attempts in Essex.

### **c. Summary**

The internship was valuable for the intern on a practical level, a professional level, a personal level, and on a philosophical level. Most important, the internship brought the entire graduate year into focus, lending it meaning and purpose. The internship allowed an arena for the synthesis of theory, skills, and professionalism that will facilitate the intern's future career in the field. The intern would be remiss not to comment on the cultural, social, and personal benefits of interning in Harlow.

The friendships and cultural experiences had great impact on the intern, and were as significant as the internship experience itself. They will continue to influence the

intern in both professional practice and personal life.

## CHAPTER IV: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS STUDY

### a. Rationale

Educational psychology has adapted and grown with major influence from both the fields of education and psychology. Drawing from both disciplines to form a unique entity, educational psychologists have consistently endeavoured to provide appropriate and meaningful service to their communities. As the needs of these communities have changed through time, so too has the role of the educational psychologist evolved to meet new demands and issues.

The intern's experiences in both Canada and the United Kingdom reflect the evolution of educational psychology, current service delivery models, and professional responses to psycho-educational issues. As British and Canadian systems are not completely congruent in all areas of professional practice and philosophy, the intern selected one focus area, **THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS**, to compare practice.



## **b. Overview of Consultation**

Educational psychology is shifting from a profession defined by a narrow view of expertise, associated jargon, and a specialist mindset to a more service-based profession that includes business planning, marketing, partnerships, and consultation (Dessent, 1994). Central to this shift is the move away from a limited focus on psycho-educational testing and assessment (i.e. psychometrics) towards a more collaborative, interactive problem-solving paradigm that espouses empowerment and cooperation of its participants (i.e. consultation).

The relationship between educational psychology and psychometrics has traditionally been a close one. While psychometrics continue to play an important role in the practice of educational psychology, the belief that educational psychology and psychometrics are synonymous is inaccurate. The scope of educational psychology is broader than its assessment methods and techniques, its measurement instruments, and its standardized tools. It would be more accurate to say that psychometric skills are included in the educational psychologist's tools of trade, no more or less important than time management skills, interpersonal skills, or organizational ability.

The consultative process is one component of educational psychology's response to the ever-changing psycho-educational milieu in which educational

psychologists operate. Through this strategy, designed to empower and directly involve system stakeholders (i.e. the student, parents, teachers, special education teachers, school administration, community and health agencies, etc.), educational psychologists introduce and develop the concept of cooperative problem-solving. By developing more effective ways of understanding and managing school problems, and by consciously applying psychological theory and practice to the process, educational psychologists are entering into a more proactive relationship with the education system.

The benefits of the consultative model to the education system are twofold: first, the student has his/her specific needs addressed; and second, the system engages in a process that promotes planning, evaluation, cooperation, brainstorming, and creative problem-solving. In addition, the consultation process provides the education system with an internal mechanism to evaluate, adjust, and guide its continual growth and development. The intern considers the above mentioned aspects of consultation in more detail in the literature review section of this report.

The intern desired to conduct qualitative field research on the consultative process used by educational psychologists in both St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada and Harlow, Essex, U.K. and comparatively analyze the professional practices and perspectives, as related to the process. Research methodology followed a semi-

structured interview format, which will be described in detail below.

### **c. Data Collection and Instruments**

#### *i. Introduction*

The research data was collected between March and July of 1995. A total of eight (8) educational psychologists participated in the research via semi-structured interviews. To maintain the validity of the sample, four (4) educational psychologists operating in St. John's, Newfoundland were interviewed, as well as four (4) Harlow educational psychologists. All participants were approached by the intern and gave their informed consent to be included in the research (sample letters of consent are found in Appendix B). In an effort to maintain anonymity, the educational psychologists were identified by number only: i.e. nf1 (Newfoundland Educational Psychologist #1), nf2, nf3, nf4; uk5 (United Kingdom Educational Psychologist #5), uk6, uk7, and uk8. All educational psychologists are currently registered psychologists with their local psychological associations.

#### *ii. Questionnaires*

Questionnaires were developed using a series of open-ended questions designed to encourage discussion around consultation practice and philosophy. The

questionnaire template is presented in Appendix A. The questionnaires were used by the interviewer as a guide during the actual interview sessions.

### *iii. Semi-structured interviews*

The interview process took from approximately 20-60 minutes per interview, and interviewees were encouraged to speak at length regarding the consultative process, and regarding their perspectives and opinions on the process as it relates to educational psychology. All participants commented on areas covered in the questionnaire, and contributed rich data samples. Interviews were held during working hours at each educational psychologist's respective place of employment. All interviews were held in private.

### *iv. Taping and transcribing*

In an effort to accurately capture the educational psychologists' thoughts verbatim, each interview was audio-tape recorded with consent. This process allowed a natural flow during the interview, as there was no note-taking required and conversation could continue unchecked. The audiotapes were later transcribed verbatim, which facilitated reflection on the precise context of the interview data. The transcriptions were reviewed and excerpts selected for inclusion in this report.

#### **d. Review of the Literature**

The educational psychologist has, for many years, practised in the narrowly defined role of mental testing. However, the role of psychologist does not end with the formal assessment of a student and a subsequent report: an educational psychologist's involvement may include presentations at case conferences and consultation with the student, parents, teachers, and other professionals (Sattler, 1992). Cole and Siegel (1990) distinguish between two roles for the school psychologist: the traditional technocrat who provides mental testing and assessment services to teachers and fulfils a "diagnosis-for-placement-in-special-education" role, contrasted with a more encompassing perception of the school psychologist as educational problem-solver and consultant who is able to draw on a wide body of knowledge for the benefit of students, parents and educators. To serve children effectively, school psychologists must (first and foremost) concentrate their attention and personal expertise on adults: a shift from direct to indirect service delivery (Gutkin and Conoley, 1990). It is in the context of the emerging consultative paradigm that the intern's research was pursued.

##### *i. Defining Consultation*

It has been stated that there are as many interpretations of the term consultation as there are contexts in which it useful to "consider jointly" and "to take

counsel" (Hanko in Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell, & Louw, 1992). Consultation, as it applies to the educational psychologist, has been defined as a process in which concerns are raised and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated which combines exploration, assessment, intervention and review (Wagner, 1995). Similarly, Conoley & Conoley (in Davis & Hartsough, 1992) defined consultation as a voluntary, non-supervisory relationship between professionals from differing fields, established to aid one party in their professional functioning. Complementary to this perspective is the position that consultation is an interpersonal process similar to teaching, having some elements in common with supervision, and occasionally looks like psychotherapy (Robbins & Spencer in Davis & Hartsough, 1992). A third definition from File & Kontos (1992) describes the consultative process as both helping and triadic; the consultant (i.e. the educational psychologist) provides services to a client (i.e. the child and the family) through a mediator or consultee (i.e. the family, the teachers, the caregivers, the school, and other involved professionals). Each of these definitions touches on different aspects of consultation, and all reflect valid elements of the process. However, linking each definition and contributing to the real power of the consultative process in the educational context is the fact that consultation gives ownership of problem to students and their teachers (Coleman, 1994). It is the empowerment of the consultees in the system that makes the entire

process a proactive rather than a reactive exercise, and it is for precisely this reason that consultation is so valuable to educational psychologists, to the education system, and ultimately, to the student.

Key to the discussion of consultation is the distinction that is drawn along the direct-indirect service continuum (i.e. whether school psychologists are providing services directly or indirectly to their clients). The demands of each of the two models, while sharing some commonalities (i.e. knowledge and expertise regarding assessment, diagnosis, and intervention) do in fact require different sets of skills. With direct service, it is the educational psychologist's therapeutic skills with children that are paramount, while with indirect service, it is the educational psychologist's ability to work effectively with adults that is most important (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990). Working within this continuum, Siegel & Cole (1990) and also Greenough, Schwean, & Saklofske (1993) stated that the direct service paradigm relegates the school psychologist to an expert tester who functions in a reactive, response model, and whose assessment process becomes static (versus an interactive process over time). Other research points to the staggering needs of our children in relation to the limited psychological resources available, and to the fact that adults rather than children control the environments that children function in, as an indictment of direct service delivery, and as supportive of indirect service

delivery/consultative process (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990).

Distinguished from other helping relationships, consultation can be broadly regarded as an indirect service delivery model where a consultant and a consultee work together to address a mutually identified goal for the client (Buysse, Schulte, Pierce, & Terry, 1994). Consultation involves working with the person who has the professional responsibility to be (or is the most) concerned (i.e. the consultee) since that person is, by definition, the most motivated towards achieving change (Wagner, 1995). Studies show that the major segment of educational psychologists' time is spent in assessment and consultation, with the trend being toward an increase in consultation with teachers (Cheramic & Sutter, 1993). When consultative aspects of the assessment process are added to the consultative continuum, research indicates that educational psychologists spend up to 90% of their time on indirect services. In addition, consultation appears to maximize the potential impact of school psychological services, and consistently emerges as the activity most preferred by psychologists (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990). The research implies that contemporary school psychology is an indirect service delivery profession (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990).



## *ii. Theoretical perspectives on Consultation*

The underpinnings of the consultative process come from many domains, including the mental health model (i.e. based on Rogerian and Alderian theory), the behavioural model (i.e. based on behaviour learning theory), organizational/process models (i.e. based on systems change theory) and the collaborative model (based on the principles of collaboration and parity, and characterized by mutual control and mutual goals among team members) (File & Kontos, 1992). In addition, Personal Construct Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, and Systems Thinking/ Family Therapy have all influenced the development of the consultative orientation (Wagner, 1995). Scholten (in Cole & Siegel, 1990) has noted that models of consultation have also been developed based upon the level of intervention (i.e. individual child, classroom, or system), and upon the consultants' approach (i.e. facilitative or expert). Theoretically, consultation is based on the premise that positive change in student behaviour can be produced indirectly when a consultant engages with teachers or other school personnel in collaborative problem-solving (Tingstrom, Little, & Stewart, 1990). Consultation is also grounded in the concepts of equal relationships, mutual trust and open communication, joint problem identification, pooling and identifying effective strategies, and shared responsibility in strategy implementation and evaluation (Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell, & Louw, 1992). Regardless of

model or orientation, there are generic characteristics to all forms of consultation. Consultation is a "helping-to-problem-solve" process which occurs between a professional help-giver and a help-seeker. It is a voluntary relationship in which the help-giver and help-seeker share in solving the problem. The goal is to solve a current problem of the help-seeker, and the help-seeker profits from the relationship in such a way that future problems may be handled more sensitively and skilfully (Meyers et al, 1979, in Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell, & Louw, 1992).

### *iii. Goals of consultation*

The purpose and goals of consultation are most often tied to the particular model that the process follows. Yet, there are general goals that hold true for most models. These include (but are not limited to) the following: offering help to the person most concerned, i.e. assisting classroom teachers in working more effectively with both their students with disabilities and those students at risk for special education referral (Glang, Giersten, & Morvant, 1994); addressing work at different levels of the school; offering teachers a forum for professional development; and providing explanations and understandings of school-based problems using interactionism and systems thinking in a collaborative framework (Wagner, 1995). Extending the consultative range, Cole (1991) suggests that an educational

psychologist's consultative work should involve regular education students as well. The ultimate goal of consultation, however, is to enhance children's learning, to make services available to all students, and to utilize multiple approaches to service delivery (Cole & Siegel, 1990).

#### *iv. Supporting consultative research*

When compared to the number of educational psychologists who use consultation as a way of practice, there is an acknowledged paucity of research on the subject. However, recent research has confirmed some long-held beliefs regarding the consultation process, and offered some potential research directions for the future. Studies have considered the importance of evaluation to consultation (Mueha, 1994), and the effect of interface (i.e. multidisciplinary and inter-agency) issues on consultation (Conoley & Conoley, 1991). Teacher-educational psychologist consultation programs have been shown to increase the classroom motivational climate (Singer & Houtz, 1992). In terms of programming, early childhood integration programs for children with disabilities include consultation as a key component (File & Kontos, 1992). Some of the most definitive work, however, has as its focus the positive relationship between consultation, collaboration and communication.

Consultation depends on collaboration (Davidow, 1994; Buysse, Schulte, Pierce, & Terry, 1994) with teamwork and cooperation viewed as important contributors to successful consultation (Erchul, 1993). While successful consultants should be knowledgeable, competent, and congenial, study has indicated that the ideal consultation relationship is voluntary, egalitarian, and collegial in nature, and that interventions developed via a collaborative model are more acceptable to teachers than working relationships characterized by isolation (Kutsick, Gutkin, & Witt, 1991). Succinctly, collaboration and cooperation are more effective than dictating (Davidow, 1994). In addition, the consultant's facilitative characteristics have been found to be important to success (Weissenburger, Fine, & Poggio, 1982). Consultation, therefore, can be viewed as a social interaction in which success or failure depends in large part on the dynamics of social interaction (Tingstrom, Little, & Stewart, 1990). At its most basic level, consultation is an interpersonal exchange; success is dependant on the consultant's communication and interpersonal skills (Davidow, 1994).

Based on this research, one would expect that the processes used by practising school psychologists to communicate their knowledge are at least as important as the content of the knowledge that is communicated (Gutkin & Conoley, 1990). For example, effective interpersonal skills (i.e. counselling skills; active

listening, warmth, interest, respect, and empathy) were found to be crucial to the foundation of the consultation process (Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell, & Louw, 1992; File & Kontos, 1992). Davidow (1994) reported that the communication of psychological findings is as important as the findings themselves. Interestingly, a collaborative consultation approach involving shared responsibility and a facilitative (versus directive) interactive style has come to be preferred by consultants and consumers, implying that content and process should be equally stressed (Buisse, Schulte, Pierce, & Terry, 1994). It would be accurate to state that consultation in schools is the solution of problems by having educational psychologists and schools work together in a preventative, creative, and effective manner, rather than working in a crisis response manner or conducting assessments for placement (Wagner, 1995).

#### *v. Barriers to consultation*

Barriers to consultation exist at varying levels of a system, ranging from regional systems to local systems, and from broad programs to individual classrooms. These include (but are not limited to) policies and practices that do not support consultation, lack of professional preparation in consultation skills, over-emphasis on direct service delivery, time and caseload constraints, differing knowledge-bases underlying special and regular education, issues of credibility, nonconformity to

varying conceptual frameworks, the development of hierarchies, unrealistic expectations, desires to maintain the status quo, and low self confidence (File & Kontos, 1992). Of major concern to the school psychologist is the possibility that even the most effective intervention strategies may not be carried out (Conoley & Conoley, 1991). School psychologists are dependant on adult third parties such as teachers and parents to deliver their services. If the third parties do not act on the educational psychologist's recommendations appropriately, there will be little if any positive impact on the child. The question of whether third parties choose to act on an educational psychologist's treatment recommendations in the manner intended is a complex behaviour resulting from a myriad of intra-personal, inter-personal, and extra-personal forces (Cutkin & Conoley, 1990). These forces include negative or irrational teacher attitudes which can interfere with the consultative process (Weissenburger, Fine, & Poggio, 1982), and parents resistance to the consultative process (i.e. when the consultant is unsuccessful in influencing the consultee to engage actively in a problem-solving process) (Tingstrom, Little & Stewart, 1990; Campbell, 1993). With most teachers wanting concreteness, specificity, intensity, and practicality from consultants (Giang, Gersten, & Morvant, 1994), pressure is placed upon the consultant to provide direct service and play the role of expert, a situation which undermines the consultative process. Thus, it is difficult to maintain

equality in what many regard as a help-giver/help-recipient relationship (Frehul, 1993).

### **c. Results and Discussion**

The intern considered the research question "what differences exist in perspective and practice with regard to consultation between educational psychologists practising in St. John's, Newfoundland and Harlow, West Essex?". The intern desired to explore both the mechanics and the personal responses of both groups in order to determine at what point along a continuum the two systems exist. The intern hypothesized that if educational psychologists practised within a particular model of consultation (i.e. collaborative problem-solving), they would show higher application of theory to practice and to consultation issues than would educational psychologists who did not practise within this model. The implications of this research would contribute to the confirmation of the efficacy of the consultative approach in educational psychology. The areas that the research focused upon were: defining consultation, the mechanics of consultation, and consultation issues. These areas were chosen to provide information from which to compare the consultative processes of the two systems.

*i. Defining Consultation*

The interviewees were asked to define consultation. The general pattern of responses indicated that there was some difference in the precision and conformity of definitions both within and between groups. The British educational psychologists' definitions of consultation showed little variance, and referred to the process directly or indirectly as an interactive, problem-solving process. For example, uk6 defined consultation as "...active problem-solving...providing a structure in which to do problem-solving, to engage others (i.e. the class teacher, the SENCO, the system) in that problem-solving process, not to provide solutions. Consultation imparts skills and knowledge, and also recognizes skills and knowledge. It's actually empowering." Similarly, uk8 described consultation as a process, "one way of working with other people, clarifying your role and engaging them in an interactional process based on a problem-solving approach. Through the consultative process, you (the educational psychologist) don't take anything away from the person; rather, you are trying to help other people to be independent problem solvers." Indirectly, both uk5 and uk7 included the essence of the problem-solving paradigm, with uk7 stating that "consultation for me, in the broadest sense, means meeting with people, and seeing if, by being a consultant to them, I can help them think more clearly about what they are concerned about."



In contrast, the Newfoundland educational psychologists showed more variance in their responses. These definitions included discussing specific cases, "getting advice from colleagues, working with administration, getting together with two or three other people and putting your heads together, listening, brainstorming and coming up with strategies to help the child" (nf2), "giving direction and advice" (nf4), and "clarifying the issues in a multidisciplinary approach"(nf3). While all agreed on who would be involved in the process (i.e. administration, counsellors, teachers, and significant others), there was considerable variance in the interpersonal interaction that would take place, and in the conceptual framework in which the consultation would occur. For example, nf3 focused on the importance of interpersonal skills to the process, while making reference to the problem-solving model: "Consultation is a means of communication. It's a means of gathering insight and information, usually in a case about an individual. It's multidisciplinary, and it's non-objective in the sense that it's active and reflective listening. It's aimed at presenting a clear picture of what the issues are surrounding an individual and then, from that, making recommendations to plan to address those issues."

Nf4 worked in a more directive context; "I consult with counsellors, where they call to bounce ideas off me and to get advice on procedure or where they should go with a particular assessment. The other area would be the teachers, where they

present a problem and you listen and give suggestions on how to proceed." NfI presented a clear link to the problem-solving paradigm: "Consultation occurs when I get a call (i.e. from a school administrator, counsellor, or a teacher) and we discuss what has been done, what needs to be done, and then I leave it in the hands of whoever is making the referral: usually (90-95% of the time), when a school is calling me to consult, they want me to take the case." The variance in definitions reflect the different foci that individual psychologists have towards consultation.

These results may indicate that consultation is not as clearly defined in the Newfoundland context as in the West Essex context. The data show that there was more consistency between the British educational psychologists in their definition of consultation, as well as more precision in identifying the structural framework for their consultative practice. One possible implication of this finding is that how educational psychologists define consultation may have consequences on how they interpret and practise consultation in their personal practice.

## *ii. Mechanics of Consultation*

The interview explored the mechanics of consultation in both settings. This discussion included (but was not limited to): who is involved in consultation; the contextual and environmental realities of consultation; how the process is initiated

and followed up; the structure and content of consultation session; the roles and responsibilities of educational psychologists in the consultative process; and how success is measured with regard to consultation.

There were similarities and differences found both within and between the Newfoundland and British educational psychologists in terms of the mechanics of consultation. Most educational psychologists in both contexts agreed with regard to who would be involved in the process (including teachers, counsellors, administrators, the student, parents, and other professionals). For the Newfoundland educational psychologists, reference was made to the program planning team process by all interviewees. Inclusions on such a team were described by n13 as "any person who would be seen as a stakeholder with respect to the student, or in other words, anybody who was trying to meet the specific needs of that student". These results were similar to the British educational psychologists' data, which stated that the same basic group (i.e. stakeholders) would be involved in the process, with the addendum that "who is involved is directly related to who is presenting and the overall context of the case" (uk6).

Educational psychologists in both settings consulted in the same basic environments: the multidisciplinary team context, the teacher--educational psychologist context, the counsellor--educational psychologist context, the

administration--educational psychologist context, the parent--educational psychologist context, the student--educational psychologist context, the stakeholder--educational psychologist context and variations on these contexts (i.e. combinations teacher--parent--educational psychologist context).

The consultation process was usually (but not exclusively) initiated by the consultee, and this held true for both the Newfoundland and British educational psychologists. Consultation could be "triggered when the school has decided that it needs resources additional to the school to deal with whatever problem confronts them" (uk5), and a general consensus to this qualifier was noted in the majority of interviews from both systems.

The structure and content of the actual consultation meeting differed greatly between the British and Newfoundland systems. Nf2 responded that there was a degree of informality and flexibility to consultation; "sometimes it's to listen, see what's going on and see what we can come up with (i.e. brainstorming)-what strategies do we come up with to help the child." This was similar to nf1 response, who added "usually, when you go into a school to do something, you end up consulting on half a dozen different things." Nf4 made reference to the informal nature of consultation: "They (i.e. the consultees) talk to you, and they want to get some input, or get you involved in the program planning team process; you give

suggestions, ideas and insights, and you also educate the consultees". The program planning team process (i.e. multidisciplinary approach) was related (but not exclusively) to consultation by the majority of Newfoundland educational psychologists, where the structure "followed the guidelines for the multidisciplinary framework" (n13).

In contrast, the British educational psychologists engaged the consultees in an interpersonal problem-solving process. The educational psychologists, such as uk8, described the process as such, "to help the consultees to sort out their priorities, keeping in mind one's own agenda and framework...it could be about individual pupils, but it can also take in other issues...it would be largely taking a problem-solving approach. I wouldn't be going in as a blank sheet. I would have a framework (i.e. the problem-solving model) that I would be following". The process has a definite structure and format. Uk5 offered, "my role would be to direct the conversation and bring some systematic thinking to it". Uk7 stated that "the consultation process would have to be structured...in the sense that some basic principles would have to be kept in mind; I wouldn't feel that the consultation was successful unless I was clear about the structure and expectations before I started (the process)." Similarly, uk5 stated quite succinctly that consultation is "actually around framework and providing a structure in which to do problem-solving."

In response to inquiry regarding the role of the consultant, there were differences within and between groups. The responses in the Newfoundland sample ranged from participant-observer (nf2, nf4) to active leader (nf1 and nf3), and from a directive, expertise perspective (nf1, and nf4) to a facilitative, collaborative perspective (nf2, nf3). There was consistency among all Newfoundland educational psychologists regarding the importance of listening to the consultee, but subsequent action could range from collaboration to providing expertise.

Among the British sample, there was a greater consistency of role. Relating back to the framework of problem-solver, there was consensus among the British educational psychologists that the consultant be an active listener, empathic, and a guide and "empowerer" to help the consultee approach the problem in a different way (i.e. using a problem-solving approach). In addition, uk6 offered that "another key part (of consultation) is keeping the discussion quite focused on what the issue is, or even maybe broadening it (the discussion) out and seeing it as a different issue to what is being presented. It's very much providing the framework for a meaningful discussion; not just a chat or a "winge" (complaint) session, but a session that will produce some sort of action by somebody (action that might make a minimal amount of difference to the young person in the system at that point in time). My responsibility within any consultation is always to try and make a child's experience

within an educational setting more purposeful and constructive." In addition, the importance on counselling skills (i.e. active listening, empathy, rephrasing, reflecting back, confrontation, and negotiation) was cited by all British educational psychologists as central to the consultative process.

Uk5, speaking on the same issue of role, presented the following perspective: "In my experience, education is more of a caring-based process, as opposed to a knowledge-based process. My role is to direct the conversation and to bring a bit of systematic thinking (and knowledge) to the caring process which is going on." Uk8 added, "there are times when I will be an active listener, and times when I may be needing information, so I may have to be asking specific questions or reflecting back to get that person to think. And sometimes, you might have to actually take the issue away from them, so that they can think about how to handle it better."

With regard to the consultation follow-up process, there were similarities within and between groups. The Newfoundland educational psychologists shared the opinion that follow-up would be the responsibility of the school, with the exception of those instances where, in a multidisciplinary team, that responsibility would fall to the case manager or the person with the primary leadership role. Within the British context, it was held by the majority of educational psychologists that schools incorporate follow-up as part of their review at each stage of the assessment process.

"The Code of Practice puts a lot of the follow-up responsibility on the school, whereas that might not have been the case prior to the Code" (uk5). Additionally, educational psychologists build feedback into the consultation process, so that it is possible to "draw consultees into the consultation circle by feeding them back information. Feedback is an essential part of that network. You follow things up to see how they've gone, and if they've gone abysmally, then fine...use that as a baseline for change and for doing something different" (uk6).

In asking the question "How is success measured in the consultative process?", the data reflected similarities and differences between groups. nf1 stated that "theoretically, success is determined at the follow-up meeting, in terms of whether something has been done or not", and nf3 concurred, stating, "the purpose of the follow-up session is to meet after an appropriate time and evaluate the interventions that have been implemented. Often we find that something is working fine over here, but not over there, so you make adjustments where needed." This perspective was broadened by nf2, who offered that consultations are successful when "something has been put in place, that something has been decided upon".

British educational psychologists reported the following measures of success. Informally, educational psychologists look for general indicators, such as "is the session going well? or not, are you getting on with the consultee, are they listening to



you, what are they saying to you, as well as those harder to define moments where you've been pushing really hard with, for example, a parent and a teacher, and suddenly, something happens and you are on the outside...something is going on without you, and that's a success" (uk8). Also, the British educational psychologists keep records of school visits called School Summary Report forms, from which (upon subsequent school visits) the psychologist can review actions taken, the outcomes, and the relative success of those actions. In addition, "taking note of people's perceptions are important" (uk8). Uk5 underscored this point by saying that success can be measured "in terms of the teacher's expectations, their affect following the session, and if the teachers attention has been drawn to a clear next step that can be seen as action." There would have to be a clear idea of expectations and structure "prior to starting the consultative process", as referred to earlier by uk7. Speaking more globally, uk6 stated that "a good insight to whether or not an educational psychologist's involvement has been successful is how fine-tuned the system becomes in identifying the child's needs and seeing the needs in context, and how questions directed to the educational psychologist then change. Not so much, that "this child can't cope in this school, ever", full stop; but rather, how can we make things different so that the child can access the curriculum?". While acknowledging the importance of reviewing whether or not action has been implemented, or is

successful, the point was made that because consultation is an on-going process (i.e. a way of working), "the idea of being a consultant is to actually give the consultative skills away so that people can use them as part of their own practice" (uk6), and as such, success very much lies with the consultee's response to the consultation process.

To summarize the similarities and differences to the mechanics of consultation between Newfoundland and British educational psychologists, the data indicate that there are some similarities between the two groups (i.e. who is involved in consultation, the contextual and environmental realities of consultation, and how the process is initiated and followed up). However, these similarities appear to be in some instances superficial. That is, the similarities might not be at a structural or philosophical level, but may exist at the level of context (i.e. questions of who, where, and when, but not of how). The differences between the two systems (i.e. the structure and content of consultation session, the roles and responsibilities of educational psychologists in the consultative process, and how success is measured with regard to consultation) appear to relate back to the initial definitions of consultation offered by each group, and the theoretical frameworks that generate these definitions. The British system appears to support its educational psychologists in their of practise of consultation from a theoretical framework (i.e. the problem-

solving model), which may partially explain the higher degree of consistency both among their colleagues and with current consultation literature than with their Newfoundland counterparts. A possible explanation for the finding that U.K. psychologists are more consistent in some of their viewpoints might be that school psychology is a "new" profession in Newfoundland; for example, there has only been one draft of roles and responsibilities ever drafted. In terms of the draft, the evolving role of the Newfoundland educational psychologist will be more consistent with the U.K.'s "problem-solving" consultative model. A possible implication of this data is that without contextual support and theoretical framework from which to practise consultation, it may be difficult to incorporate goals such as empowering others, being proactive, and working collaboratively into regular practice. If this is the case, then the question may be asked: if a process does not include these elements, can it still be defined as consultation?

### *iii. Consultation Issues*

Following discussion of the mechanics of consultation, the interviewer explored some of the issues relating to the consultative process, and its application by educational psychologists. These issues included (but were not limited to) benefits, problems, trends, and perspectives on consultative practice, as well as

factors influencing consultation, and lending improvement to the consultative process.

There were similarities and differences between the two settings with regard to the benefits of the consultative process. For Newfoundland educational psychologists, the benefits of the consultative process included "being able to gather information at one time without going looking for it" (nf1), and (similar to the British experience) "affording the educational psychologist the expertise of other people, bringing a multifaceted approach to a multifaceted problem, using a holistic approach, and ultimately having happier children who are happy to be in school" (nf3). Others (nf2 and nf4) indicated that they did think the process was beneficial, but did not elaborate.

Contrasting in some aspects with the Newfoundland experience, the British educational psychologists indicated that the benefits included "being perceived as part of the school (i.e. non-threatening and competent), as having a range of skills and able to be involved in a range of things (i.e. help with policy), and by being people that consultees can talk to, who will listen, and can make them feel good" (uk8). In addition, uk8 offered that, "depending on the outcomes, the process could be beneficial to the student...with students and teachers becoming empowered to work through their own problems, and to change their views (if not behaviours) about

specific problems".

With regard to time spent on consultative tasks and demands for increasing consultative service, there were similarities and differences both within and between groups. For the Newfoundland psychologists, the percentage of time spent in consultation ranged from 50% (nf1) to 90% (nf3). In addition, all educational psychologists related that they engaged in some form of consultation daily, and that the actual time spent in consultation has been increasing over the last several years.

The British educational psychologists reported that while the demand for increased consultation exists, they relate it more to the "way in which they work" than to a specific skill, per se. In Essex, the demands made on consultants involve "more time, more support, and more advice at earlier stages" (uk8). Uk5 estimated that about half of the actual contact time was spent in consultation, and uk7 reported that "in the staged model of assessment, educational psychologists function almost exclusively as consultants in the early stages, and quite often in the later stages as well". All British educational psychologists, however, described consultation as the way they approach work, and therefore an estimation of time on-task was not easily achieved.

Educational psychologists in both settings were asked to comment on problems with the consultative process. For Newfoundland educational

psychologists, problems with the process included "difficulty in scheduling (i.e. getting everyone together)" (nf2), and "getting very good at identifying what the child needs, but not being able to provide for those needs" (nf3). British educational psychologists, as well, considered various aspects of the process as problematic; for example, uk5 stated that one area of concern was "the balance between a caring-based approach and a knowledge-based approach". In addition, uk6 suggested that "self evaluation of effectiveness is a problem because of competing pressures: schools that want experts and solutions, versus a view of consultation as a process that is, in effect, long-term. But consultation is an empowering process, not giving advice".

Educational psychologists in both settings were given an opportunity to comment on how their respective consultative practices could be improved. nf1 indicated that improvements could be made in the areas of "case management and resource allocation", while nf2 indicated that "additional administrative support would be an asset", and nf3 reported that "while we can identify problems, we must get better at providing for those same problems".

The British perspective on improving the system included uk8's suggestion that "educational psychologists need to revisit what happens at stage 3 of assessment (i.e. a full scale report), and to clarify what it is we are doing when educational

psychologists consult; we have to know what it is we are offering, and try to evaluate it more specifically." Uk5 suggested that "those involved with the consultation process could be more informed regarding the theoretical constructs of consultation and the resultant implications for practice."

All educational psychologists in both systems responded positively to the question of how they personally evaluate the consultative process. However, the question of validity is raised in that some educational psychologist's consultative practice more closely resembled the direct, expert-based service delivery model than a collaborative model. Thus, educational psychologists in different settings may not have been endorsing the same model.

To summarize, the data indicated some similarities between Newfoundland and British educational psychologists with regard to selected consultative issues. The differences, however, included perspectives on benefits of, problems with improving, and time spent in consultation. The data may indicate that how one integrates theoretical frameworks with actual practice influences how one perceives issues related to the consultation process.

### **f. Comparative Analysis of Essex and Newfoundland Consultation Practices.**

The intern hypothesized that if educational psychologists practised within a particular model of consultation (i.e. collaborative problem-solving), they would achieve a higher application of theory to practice and to consultation issues than would educational psychologists who did not practice from within this model. The results tentatively supported this hypothesis. Of the educational psychologists that applied the theoretical framework to their definition of consultation, the majority utilized the collaborative, consultative model in their practice. Of those that did not subscribe to a clear framework, there was a tendency to practise in a directive expertise role, while still engaging in self-defined "consultation". Further, it was noted that there was a possible difference between consultative practice in Newfoundland and in Essex, in that British educational psychologists more clearly related the collaborative framework to their practice than did Newfoundland educational psychologists. The intern speculates that this situation may be due to differences in training, differences in education systems, cultural differences, and differences in support. The intern notes that the existence of a legislated National Curriculum, a formalized Code of Practice, and a staged approach to assessment of special needs (that encourage collaborative problem-solving) are strong supports in the effort to practice in a consultative manner.



The implications for educational psychology include the following. Educational psychologists may benefit from developing a clear theoretical framework from within which to practice consultation. As noted previously, the demands for consultation are increasing, both from purely logistical needs to more theoretical reasons. Educational psychologists will therefore be called upon to practice consultatively in an increasingly greater capacity. While educating and informing consultees about the consultation process is important to the success of consultation, it is possible that other contributing factors are equally important to successful consultation. Additional support in the form of a legislated, staged approach to assessment (as demonstrated by the British experience) may facilitate the transition from direct, expert-based service delivery to one that is more indirect, and based on a collaborative consultation model.

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## Appendix A.

Data collection questionnaire prepared for study of comparative analysis of Consultation practices used by educational psychologists in St. John's, Newfoundland, and West Essex, England.

### *Interview Questions*

#### *Defining Consultation:*

- a. What is consultation and how does it work?
- b. How are consultations important? Is the process beneficial or benign?
- c. What is/are the primary purpose (s), goals, and desired outcomes of a consultation session?
- d. How would you define consultation in terms of Educational Psychology?

#### *Naming and Describing the Participants:*

- e. Who is involved in the Consultation process?
- f. What are your roles and responsibilities in the Consultation process?
- g. What are the other roles in Consultation?

#### *Explaining the Consultation process:*

- h. Who begins the consultation process, and what steps are involved?
- i. What is the focus of the Consultation session?
- j. Is there a preliminary process for the educational psychologist prior to the

Consultation? What does it entail for the educational psychologist?

k. When and where do Consultation take place?

l. Who schedules/arranges, manages, chairs, and follows up Consultation?

m. Who attends the actual consultation session?

n. What is the content of the consultation session?

o. How is the action decided on at the Consultation?

p. How long are Consultation sessions, generally?

q. How are Consultation sessions followed up?

r. How do you know the Consultation process is successful?

*The educational psychologist's perspectives on Consultation:*

s. What is your employer's policy regarding Consultation?

t. How does the Consultation process benefit the educational psychologist/the student/the system?

u. How much of your time is spent in Consultation? Is it cost effective?

v. Is your participation in Consultation increasing, decreasing or staying the same? Why?

w. How does Consultation integrate with other educational psychologist duties?

x. What are some of the problems with the Consultation process?

y. How would you evaluate Consultation as an educational psychologist practice?

z. How can the Consultation process be improved?

&. Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview regarding Consultation that has not been addressed?

## Appendix B.

## Consent forms for educational psychologist's Participation in Research.

*Form i: St. John's Letter*

Dear educational psychologist,

We are Educational Psychology Graduate students in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. With the Faculty of Education's approval, we are conducting research concerning educational psychologist's experience in the areas of assessment and consultation. The data collected will be used in comparative analysis research components of our respective Internship reports.

Central to our research is the gathering educational psychologist's views concerning assessment and consultation. To do this, we wish to interview four (4) educational psychologists in St. John's, Newfoundland, and four (4) educational psychologists in Harlow, Essex, England. The interview, approximately 25-35 minutes in length, will pertain to such things as: the role and responsibilities of the school psychologist in St. John's and Harlow, and assessment and consultation as it relates to the educational psychologist. Upon completion of this research, we will include our findings in our respective internship reports. It is expected that such a comparative analysis of the Newfoundland and British Education system will benefit practitioners by presenting information that they may not personally have access to.

The information gathered in this interview will not reference any school or students within the school board. The interviewer do, however, seek permission of the interviewees to identify and quote said participants. We also request permission to audio-tape each interview to ensure accurate transcriptions of the interview information.

This letter is to ask you to participate in an interview. We would appreciate your help, but you are certainly under no obligation to give your consent. The results of this study will be made available upon request. If you are in agreement with being interviewed, please sign below and return one copy to the interviewers (the other copy is yours). If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Dale McLean

Christopher Mercer

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I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby agree to be interviewed for the research project on educational psychological assessment and consultation undertaken by Dale McLean and Christopher Mercer. I understand that participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from the interview at any time. No individuals (except the interviewee) or schools will be identified, and I give permission to be audiotaped and quoted in any research article produced.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewee's Signature \_\_\_\_\_



*Form II: West Essex Letter*  
 Educational Psychologist  
 Formal Assessment and Evaluation Service  
 Harlow, West Essex, CM18 6EH

Ms. Dale McLean, Educational Psychology Intern  
 Mr. Christopher Mercer, Educational Psychology Intern  
 Memorial University of Newfoundland, Harlow Campus  
 The Maltings, Old Harlow, Essex, CM18 6EH

Dear

Please consider our request to interview you as one (1) of four (4) educational psychologists with the Formal Assessment and Evaluation Service, Brays House, Tracey's Road, Harlow, Essex. Our research is designed to be a qualitative comparative analysis of the Assessment and Consultative practices of educational psychologists in St. John's and Harlow, Essex. The information collected through interviews will form the basis of the research components for our respective final Masters of Educational Psychology Internship Reports, required for the fulfilment of our Masters programmes. The complete interview time is from 30-40 minutes, and will be conducted at Bray's House.

As our research is qualitative, we are requesting that each interviewee agree to be identified by name and quoted in the final research document. To ensure accuracy and efficiency, we are also requesting permission to audiotape the interviews for detailed analysis. Any references identifying individual students, parents, teachers, administrative staff, or individual schools will be omitted. You are under no obligation to participate, and can withdraw your support at any time. Copies of the final report will be made available to you, the other interviewees and the Local Education Authority.

Interviews conducted in April 1995 with educational psychologists in St. John's are in the process of transcription and analysis. We are planning to have our respective final reports completed by September 1st, 1995. Copies of the questionnaire included in your files. If you have any concerns or queries, please contact us at 0279-430266. *To facilitate the scheduling of interviews, we are asking that you fill in two (2) possible interview times at the bottom of this page, from which we can negotiate a session. Please forward your response to either Dale or Chris.* Thank you for your consideration of our request.  
 Sincerely,

Dale McLean

Christopher Mercer

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**Preferred Interview Appointment:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative Interview Appointment** \_\_\_\_\_







